

When we're children, people make promises to us. Even holding onto a promise gives us hope and has its own kind of excitement and anticipation, whether it's the promise of a favorite meal for our birthday; a promise that grandma's coming to visit and she's bringing a surprise; or a promise of a special vacation next year. Also a part of childhood is disappointment and distress when someone fails to keep a promise.

The last chapter of Luke, which describes several events after Easter, contains reminders and fulfillments of God's promises. Some of the events include a description of the disappointment the disciples felt because Jesus seemed to have left their hope unfulfilled, and then their excitement when they realized he had not left them after all.

The 24th chapter of Luke's Gospel is filled with descriptions of how God kept the promises that had been made, and which the disciples had found hard to believe and accept. God promised that Jesus would be raised from the dead (and then they found an empty tomb and he appeared to his disciples); God promised that Jesus would remain with us (and the disciples recognized his presence in the breaking of the bread).

With his ascension Jesus returned to the Father as he had promised. His final promise was that God would send the Holy Spirit to the disciples and they would be his witnesses. That promise was fulfilled on the feast of Pentecost, and then is described throughout the Book of Acts – the success of their preaching as his witnesses; the gifts of the Spirit that they received and shared; the miracles that occurred by the power they had been given.

God has made the same promise to us – you will be clothed with the power of the Spirit. We may also have our doubts, just like the disciples did. We have been given the same Spirit – do our doubts get in the way? It's a promise, and it's also a mystery -- that God chooses to make a dwelling place in us.

So maybe the Spirit's presence and power seem hidden to us, or maybe we have to learn better how to recognize the Spirit and respond. Maybe the Spirit's presence is manifested in a flash of insight or wisdom; maybe it's a short-lived experience of something marvelous or miraculous; maybe it's a realization of healing; maybe it's a deeper appreciation of Beauty, or a new understanding of Truth.

The promise has been made, and the promise has been fulfilled. "You are the Body of Christ, and you have been clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit." "Remember that I am with you always." Let's pray as we approach Pentecost that we can see and understand the presence of the Spirit in our own lives; and that we can overcome any doubts, in order to witness to that power, and use it as God intends.